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C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 001466

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EUR/NCE FOR FICHTE, PM FOR DOWLEY, OSD FOR SADOWSKA

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SUBJECT: PLANNED CZECH MILITARY DEPLOYMENTS FOR 2007

REF: PRAGUE 1423

Classified By: Political Counselor Michael Dodman  
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) Summary: The Czech Chamber of Deputies will vote in December on a bill authorizing proposed foreign military deployments for 2007. The bill is likely to pass without serious opposition. Increased numbers of troops are planned for Afghanistan and the Balkans, while Iraq troop levels will remain the same. A small deployment in Lebanon is planned.  
End Summary

¶2. (U) The Czech Chamber of Deputies will vote in December on a bill authorizing proposed foreign military deployments for ¶2007. The government's draft legislation would permit a maximum of 1125 Czech troops to be deployed outside the Czech Republic, up from 1000 in 2006. Each request is usually the subject of a separate vote, allowing parliamentarians to register their support for, or opposition to, specific deployments.

¶3. (C) The plan calls for authorized Iraq troop levels to remain unchanged at 100. The deteriorating security situation around Basra has led to changes in British operations, which have in turn affected the Czech deployment plans. Czech soldiers will greatly reduce or phase out Iraqi police training in 2007 as they focus more on a force protection role. One option being explored with London is for the Czech contingent to provide security at Basra airport.

¶4. (C) As Czech President Vaclav Klaus noted at Riga, authorized total troop levels for Afghanistan will be 50 per cent higher in 2007, having risen from 150 to 225. However, Afghanistan has so far proven to be the only point of (minor) disagreement in Parliament. Jan Hamacek, the CSSD Chairman of parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, told Poloff on November 22 that he had removed the provision for 35 Special Operations forces from the total of 225 troops planned for Afghanistan. However Hamacek said this had more to do with insufficient notification of the plan to Parliament rather than opposition to the mission itself. Hamacek indicated he believed the 35 Special Forces would be reintroduced for the second reading of the bill and said he would not oppose it. Rumors of a possible contribution of an 80-person military field hospital circulating in the press December 1 relate to a Czech General Staff idea rather than a plan with current backing. Embassy sources doubt the accuracy of this figure, saying 80 sounds extremely high. (Note: The Czech idea of taking over and leading a PRT in Afghanistan in 2008 (reftel) will undergo its first crucial step in the coming weeks, when

the Cabinet meets to formally consider whether or not to go forward with the proposal. Post will report on this septel. End note).

¶5. (U) Authorized troop levels for the Balkans will be set at a total of 730, divided between KFOR and the EU,s ALTHEA operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. By lumping both missions into a single authorization the government will be free to move troops freely between the missions as necessary.

¶6. (U) Ten new slots are allocated for Lebanon, made up of deminers and unexploded ordinance experts.

¶7. (C) Embassy sources at the Defense and Foreign Affairs Ministries say that the current ODS minority government had virtually assured passage of this deployments bill by adopting the previous government,s plan for 2007. As a result CSSD, which led that previous government, could not generally object to the provisions of the plan. The Christian Democrats (KDU-CSL) should not have difficulty supporting the plan. The Communist KSCM will oppose. KSCM opposition during the same vote last year was notable only for the several abstentions from some Communists who did not wish to oppose some of the deployments, particularly on the Iraq vote. MFA Security Policy Director Veronika Smigolova on December 1st confirmed that all provisions of the deployments bill are expected to pass without difficulty. Note that if for any reason the bill fails to win approval before the end of the year, Czech law permits troops to serve outside the country without Parliamentary approval for 60 days, which would provide time for legislative action without disrupting existing deployments.

¶8. (U) Changes will be possible throughout the year. While each year,s bill is generally aimed at being comprehensive, further ad-hoc deployment bills are possible. In 2006 the Czech Parliament used a second bill to authorize a 6-month deployment of Czech Special forces to Afghanistan, something that had not been finalized in time for the previous year,s omnibus bill.  
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